Amendments to the Specification

Please add the following at the top of page 1 before "Background of Invention"

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a divisional of Application No. 10/322,786, filed December 18, 2002, now ~~pending~~ U.S. Patent 6,680,406, which is a divisional of Application No. 09/670,530, filed September 27, 2000, now U.S. Patent 6,515,190, which is a divisional of Application No. 09/324,931, filed June 3, 1999, now U.S. Patent 6,160,190, which is a divisional of Application No. 09/121,106 filed July 23, 1998, now U.S. Patent 5,948,946, which is a divisional of Application No. 08/574,751 filed December 19, 1995, now U.S. Patent 5,824,622, which is a continuation-in-part of Application No. 08/362,063 filed December 22, 1994, now abandoned, which is a continuation-in-part of Application No. 08/180,250 filed January 12, 1994, now abandoned.

Please amend the paragraph bridging pages 10 and 11 as follows:

The present invention provides an improved process for the nitration of an aromatic compound wherein the improvement comprises contacting the aromatic compound with a microcomposite of the present invention as a catalyst. For example, in the nitration of benzene, a solution comprising benzene and optionally, a desiccant such as $MgSO_4$, is heated, typically to reflux at atmospheric pressure under an inert atmosphere, and a nitrating agent, for example, HNO_3 is added. The process is conducted under normal nitration conditions which conditions, such as temperature, are dependent upon the reactivity of the aromatic used. When a microcomposite of the present invention is used as a catalyst in the benzene solution, a high rate of conversion and selectivity to nitrobenzene is demonstrated as compared to "NAFION®" PFIEP alone or to the use of no catalyst (see Table I, Example 42). A preferred catalyst for this process is a microcomposite of the present invention wherein the perfluorinated ion-exchange polymer contains pendant sulfonic acid groups and wherein the metal oxide is silica, alumina, titania, germania, zirconia, alumino-silicate, zirconyl-silicate, chromic oxide and/or iron oxide. Most preferred is wherein the perfluorinated ion-exchange polymer is a "NAFION®" PFIEP and the metal oxide is silica, the most preferred "NAFION®" PFIEP having approximately 6.3 tetrafluoroethylene (TFE) molecules for every ~~perfluoro~~ perfluoro(3,6-dioxa-4-methyl-7-octenesulfonyl fluoride) molecule (CF_2=CF-O-[$CF_2CF(CF_3)$]-O-CF_2CF_2-SO_2F (PSEPVE)) and an equivalent weight of approximately 1070.